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believe, that Philo paid a visit to Jerusalem during Agrippa's reign, probably in that year when the entire people brought their firstfruits to the Sanctuary with jubilation and solemn pomp, in gratitude to God for having averted the desecration and dishonour with which Caligula had threatened the Temple. Philo might have come to Jerusalem to take part in this rejoicing, and perhaps also to greet Agrippa, who had returned from Rome, laden with honours by the Emperor Claudius, and proclaimed ruler over the whole of Judæa.

The Arabarch Alexander may have accompanied his brother Philo with the same object. The fact that he had the gates of the Temple ornamented with gold and silver certainly indicates a visit on his part to the Holy Capital. The Jews of that time looked upon the rescue of the Sanctuary from the pollution Caligula intended for it by the murder of that madman as a kind of miracle, an emphatically clear mark of divine interposition. This episode may have suggested to him the idea of adorning the Temple that enjoyed the Almighty's special protection, and thus testifying the high reverence in which he held it. For the Alexandrians, too, venerated the Sanctuary of Jerusalem as a sacred fane.

If, then, Alexander was in the Holy City with his brother Philo at the time when the rescue of the Temple from violation and Agrippa's coronation had made all Judæa happy, he may well have come into contact with the synhedrial body and its president, Gamaliel. They were probably told that he had had a costly scroll prepared, in which the letters of God's name were relieved with a plating of pure gold. In this sense we must understand the expression *ובא מעשה לפני חכמים*, "The matter came to the notice of the sages." Their decision that he could not be allowed to use his splendid scroll, which must have come to Alexander as an unpleasant surprise, was probably communicated to him personally. It is difficult to believe that after a scroll had been prepared at so much cost, the question whether it could be used would have been sent in writing all the way from Alexandria to the authorities at Jerusalem. It is more likely to have come up for discussion in a cursory manner. The Halachic rule that a Torah scroll should not be written in letters of gold, or, following the better reading, that golden letters must not be used for ornamenting God's name, originates in the time of the Arabarch Alexander and his contemporary, the patriarch Gamaliel. The decision of this single instance was made a general law. Most Halachas, not formally proposed as theses for discussion, may be conceived as having had a similar genesis. They are decisions of isolated cases that became accepted as universally binding laws.¹

II.

Burning the Talmud in 1322.—Dr. Neubauer once communicated from a Bodleian codex (Oriental Canon 496, now No. 1,061), a Hebrew elegy, which has for its theme the burning of the Talmud in 1322, and the author of which styles himself in the poem, acrostically, Joab (Frankel-Graetz, *Monatsschrift*, 1872, pp. 376, etc.). Its superscription reads as follows: *קינה על התלמוד אשר שלח בו יד (בוגד) ואיש (יין יוסף)*: עלינו רעות שקננו לרעות בשנת פ"ב לפרט. The burning of the Talmud is

¹ Compare Mishna, *Yebamoth*, XV. 3, לא דברו חכמים בקציר אלא בהוה.

repeatedly mentioned in the elegy, and its refrain is **יבנו את השרפה**. That in 1322 the Talmud was publicly burnt somewhere has hitherto been unknown. History only records the destruction of numerous copies of the Talmud in France during the reign of Louis the Pious in 1242 and 1248, and again in Italy, under the fanatical popes from 1553 onward. However, we have other confirmation of the fact on which the poem is based. In the Postscript to a Talmudical commentary of Todros ben Isaac (Cod. Bod. No. 448, catal. MS., p. 96), the fact, as well as the date, are explicitly stated.

The author tells us that he completed the Commentary in 1322, a time of great trouble. The close of the year 4081 [=1321] was a season of oppression. It witnessed the massacre of Jews by hordes of shepherds, and another slaughter of our people on account of the lepers. In this year calumniators came before the Pope to annihilate the law of truth. They burnt books, and they still audaciously boast that they will quench Israel's light. **פרשתי מסכתא זו בשעת הרחק בשנת פ"ב • ויצאת פ"א היא שנת צר ומצוק גזרת המצורעים אחר יללת הרועים • שנת שהקיפוננו מרעים •** ופני האפיפיור מלך הגוים עלו מרשיעים • נשרפו ספרים ועוד עתק מביעים • Another passage of this epilogue explains that the books which were burnt were volumes of the Talmud. **לשום התלמוד גלמוד ולהשבית תורה** The fact and the date of the year are accordingly attested. Some details in connexion with this event can also be determined; the name of the ruler who condemned the Talmud; the land where, and the month when, its destruction took place.

In another passage the commentator Todros singles out the King of Rome among the potentates of the time as an especially fanatical persecutor. **גם מלך רומי ברנזו וחמה קם לשומנו ככלי ריק למזמה כתב ויעץ** I have elsewhere proved (*Monatsschrift*, 1886), that by the King of Rome at this period the rival monarch Frederick is to be understood. He it was who incited a persecution of the Jews and condemned the Talmud. **בפיו ושפתיו אמר (מלך רומי) אפאיהם ועוד ירו נטויה לשום התלמוד** In 1321-22 this ruler obtained an advantage over his rival, Lewis of Bavaria, which he retained till September of that year. He was on good terms with Pope John XXII., who regarded his rival with disfavour. Frederick it was then who strenuously strove to destroy the Talmud.

From the circumstance that a poet of the name of Joab composed this elegy, the conclusion is forced upon us that the event which it commemorates happened in Italy, where a family of this name, with numerous branches, gained literary distinction.¹ Outside Italy we do not meet with the Biblical name Joab. At this period there lived in the Southern Peninsula two literati, both called Joab. They were contemporaries of the poet Immanuel of Rome, who eulogises one and satirises the other. The *Kinah*, moreover, affords internal evidence that the burning of the Talmud, to which it refers, occurred in Rome.

Towards the end we find the following section of a Biblical text. **והעיר תהיה אשר שם כהן הבעל וכו'** "The city which belongs to the priest of Baal" = the Pope. The then head of the church, John XXII., had, indeed, in consequence of the disturbed state of Italy, transferred his seat to Avignon. But, nevertheless, Rome continued to be the papal city. The day and the month are given in the superscription of the

¹ Compare Zunz in Geiger's *Zeitschrift* III., 146.

elegy, ומרוב היה ביום מתן תורתנו, and in its last strophe but one, ושרף תורתנו ביום אשר נתנה לנו נהפך לאבל חנינו.

There are still, however, some missing links which will have to be supplied before we can be said to possess clear knowledge of the tragic events that occurred in Rome at this time. The dates in contemporary authorities do not quite agree with those in the elegy. Joab's elegy gives, as already stated, the year 82, *i.e.*, 4082 = 1322, and the month of Siwan as the date of the conflagration of the Talmud. This year it also indicates mnemonically in the last stanza but one, וראוה חרפתנו מני נבל כלנו. The word נבל, which is punctuated, besides its allusion to the instigator of the persecution, also numerically suggests the year 82. On the other hand, we know that in 1321 a persecution of the Jews by Pope John XXII. was imminent, and was only prevented through the good offices of King Robert of Naples. Profiat Duran's זכרון השמדות is our original source for these events, and from it Samuel Usque, Ibn Verga, and Joseph Cohen have borrowed their accounts. These secondary authorities give us no additional details of the threatened persecution. That it was imminent is proved by the authentic notice that the Jewish community of Rome kept a strict fast day in the month of Siwan, 1321, when its delegates were preparing to "go to court" to avert the danger. According to Joab's elegy the Talmud was burnt a whole year later. What happened in the interval?

Todros ben Isaac gives the close of the year 4081 = 1321 as the date of the persecution. But it may have been protacted till the following year. He also, however, states that in Tebet, *i.e.*, either December, 1381, or January, 1382, the persecution had already ceased. ומושיענו אלקים. השקיט בחורש טבת זעם אפו . . . ותשקע עת הצרות from his account, two sides. In the first place it was directed against persons who were only threatened; and, in the second, against the Talmud, volumes of which were really destroyed [נשרפו הספרים] between Ellul, 1321, and January, 1322, according to Todros. But the persecution could not really have finally ceased at that date, for the elegy tells us that the Talmud was burnt Nissan, 1322. Todros says that the King of Rome wished to continue his hostile activity against the Talmud, but his evil design was frustrated by divine interposition. ומנינו יתברך גזל חניתו ויהלש לבלתי עשות אשר הרש לשום התקמור נלמור. The Talmud, accordingly, was not burnt after the first-mentioned date. Yet the elegy speaks of a conflagration which took place in Sivan, 1322. Details are needed of the events that transpired in the Roman community during the twelvemonth from the spring of 1321 till the recurrence of that season the following year. Perhaps the gap will be filled up from material that still remains in manuscript.

H. GRAETZ.

Jewish History in Arabian Historians.—The following notices, from a publication in the *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, Vol. VIII., No. 3, in a work entitled "Fragments of Syriac and Arabic Historians," edited and translated by Fr. Baethgen, are of some interest for Jewish history. As it is possible that they will be overlooked in the mass of valuable material there given, I venture to call attention to them.

(Page 108), V. year began on Monday the 2nd Hezîrân, 937 according